

Support HB 485 Title Protection for Social Workers

Our Position

Our position is that the *vulnerable* public that receive services from social workers needs every assurance that the professional providing services has met *nationally recognized standards of education, training, ethics and experience* in the social work profession.

Misleading the Public

Without some form of title act, clients and potential clients of social work services have no basis for understanding the qualifications of those persons presenting themselves as "social workers".

Misuse of the Title Social Worker

The proposed bill addresses the misuse of the title "social worker." Social workers possess a unique set of skills that are honed through substantial education and practice. Social workers train for this career through considerable educational requirements, supervised field experience, adherence to a Code of Ethics, and the successful completion of a rigorous exam. The requirements to be a social worker are specific and onerous. This bill would match title "social worker" with practice. We do not limit the practice of other licensed professionals.

The major professional helping disciplines (e.g., medicine, social work, and psychology) incorporate supervised practice in the process of professional education.

This Legislation:

- ▶ **Meets the needs of consumers** by ensuring the individual with the title of social worker has the required skill and training of fully qualified professionals.
- ▶ **Protects the public by restricting the use of the title social worker to professionals who abide** by an ethical code that emphasizes competency and integrity.
- ▶ **Provides Truth in Public Information.**
- ▶ Helps maintain the **public confidence** in professional social workers – such confidence is a critical element in successful social work with many individuals, families and communities.

What Social Work Consumer Protection Does Montana Currently Provide?

- ▶ Currently anyone can call himself a social worker without regard to training or preparation.
- ▶ Montana currently has important Title Protection for Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSW). Even individuals with these titles suffer when the terms social work and social worker are used indiscriminately.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact me at the NASW office, phone 406-449-6208, or email naswmt@mt.net.

Sincerely,

Colleen Murphy, MSW, LCSW
Executive Director